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A PERSONALITY STUDY

By

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The Modern Community

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In this personality study I shall use the following methods. First of all I shall describe the present personality of X (our subject); second, I shall describe the life of X in an endeavor to show^{how} X's present personality has come into being.

In the description of a personality I find it best to start describing the simplest elements of the individual and proceed to the most complex. The simplest elements lie in what might be called his outward appearance.

X is a fairly short and slim individual. His hair is brown, eyes blue and his complexion ruddy. His observable action would be inclined toward the extrovert side, that is, he is inclined to be rather noisy, quick of movement, very friendly in a gay sort of way, in fact, very much of a "hail fellow well met." His clothing, which if you saw him often enough, you would realize to be limited, is slightly on the "loud" side. That is, the suits are usually checked and color a little gaudy. You would also observe that (in public) he is usually "fully" dressed, that is, wearing no sweaters or combinations of coats and pants and always having a vest.

However, these things are very superficial, so let us examine his behavior. The most striking element of his behavior appears to be his friendliness, that is manifested in his

apparent ease in establishing social contacts. Perhaps the variety of cliques will give us some insight into their breadth as well as act as a measuring stick to the class he is in.

At present a large number of his friends are those in college. They roughly fall into three groups: his colleagues and classmates in the business school; students who have lived in the same boarding house or dormitory; and a widely differentiated group of students whom he drinks beer with or gets into "bull" sessions with.

Another large group are his business associates. (He works as a salesman in two different stores during his spare time.) They consist of other salesmen and the staff of his store.

Another large groupe are, to quote him, "my pals back home." They consist of the boys he has grown up with "down south," his school chums, a large number of relatives (cousins, uncles, etc.) and various business associates.

However, the largest group are an assorted lot. They range from newspaper boys to college professors. However, considering them generally they usually come from the lower or middle classes. What is more, they are not mere acquaintanceships. He knows all about their personal affairs, he has had dinner in their homes, etc. Also he never misses a chance to stop and talk with them and show a keen interest in their affairs.

Lastly, there are those selected few who really know

him well. They probably number not more than five or six. These may be differentiated from the rest by the fact that they know his personal affairs well while all the others are acquainted with him and he knows them well.

Perhaps his attitude concerning these various friendships may be summed up in this conversation.

I asked him: "Why did you spend so much time going over to see _____ when you've so much work to do."

His answer was this: "It never hurts you to be friendly with a fellow. You can't tell when he is liable to be a lot of use to you."

In connection with these friends I think that one of the distinctive aspects of his personality is his technique in manipulating them (and also his technique for making contacts). His way of getting people to do things his way is to approach or suggest something in a jovial or joking manner.

Another aspect of his personality is his energy. Anything he is doing he does untiringly. No matter how tired he may actually be, never does he appear tired or relax.

X is also very competitive. This refers both to his school work and his job as a salesman. When speaking of what he has done it is with reference to how much more or less than somebody else has done.

Another quality that X has is that he is stubborn. This quality is not observable in social situations as he is

the fact that the present position of the law is such that the courts are bound to follow the decisions of the House of Lords. It is true that the House of Lords has sometimes refused to follow its own previous decisions, but this is not the case in the present instance. The House of Lords has consistently held that the law is as stated in the present case.

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usually very agreeable. However, in business and in private affairs if he has made a decision it is very difficult to change.

His temper is well controlled, never have I seen him display it violently. Things that would usually make the average person angry cause him to be bitter or rather sulky. Also he is inclined to vary between two extreme moods, that of being jovial and that of being dejected.

Thus we complete his behavior and pass on to the more fundamental aspects of his personality: his values and interests. These I shall discuss very briefly.

One of his most obvious values is that of wealth. Probably more than anything else he would like to make a great deal of money. With this money he could gain many of the things he has never had but always wanted: financial security, clothes, a car, a number of horses, and a number of other material things. He very definitely would not be interested in his social status, i.e., belonging to a higher class. I say this because often he has spoken rather bitterly about those "upper-class snobs."

He also would like to be well educated. To him this would mean to be able to discuss convincingly a number of subjects. Also it would mean having good manners. (In both of these he realizes that he is somewhat lacking.)

The final value I will mention (if you can call it a value) is that he would like to do a variety of things or to have a large number of experiences of any sort. He is very

definitely against any type of settled life.

In conclusion let me say that as far as I can see his values or system of values still are in the primitive stage.

Now I shall attempt to describe his life and show how this personality, just described, has come into being.

X was born in a small southern coastal town about 22 years ago. His father worked in the town power plant (though I am sure he would have rather been a farmer or a rancher). He is a man of moderate tastes and has a fine sense of humor. X has obviously acquired his joviality and sense of humor from his father. However, as far as I can see the only way X's father has influenced X's personality is in this respect. X's mother had been a school teacher and a very active person in community affairs. She is also keenly aware of the fact that they are poor. Her influence on X is well marked. First of all, X has the same sort of contempt for being poor, hence his value on wealth. Many of his quick actions and his tirelessness are characteristic of her. Also, later she placed the other two children in X's care and gave him great responsibility.

During the first eight years of X's life he lived in town. He started to school when he was six and evidently was a model student. However, at the age of eight his family moved to a small farm outside of town. Shortly after that the family suffered financial reverses and has been poor ever since.

Evidently his early memories of school are not pleasant. It seems that he had a bad temper, but every time he displayed

containing several types of sealed lines.

In connection with the above, it is noted that

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it he received a beating from his classmates who were larger than he. Also his size kept him from athletic competition, which he desired to do very much. However, he compensated by becoming a very good student and trying to surpass all his schoolmates in good marks.

At the age of twelve he worked before and after school on a paper route. X did this upon the family's suggestion. When he first began working he was shy and retiring, but in four years' time he was head of the newspaper delivery system and far from being shy and retiring. This change may be due to a man he calls "Uncle Bill," a prominent banker in that town and X's Sunday School teacher.

"Uncle Bill" took an interest in X and really tutored him in the ways of business and salesmanship. When X first started working on the newspaper route, "Uncle Bill" constantly gave him advice. I might add that due to X's hero-worship of Uncle Bill this advice was always taken.

During X's years in high school he eventually won the respect of his fellow students by his fine record as a business manager of the "Yearbook" (evidently he made a profit on the high school yearbook which was unusual), and his directing of the newspaper route.

During his senior year in high school he got a job working as a salesman in a local store. He has done the same type of work both in his home town and in Chicago. The sales-

men with whom he worked did much to form his tastes and manners.

His two years in Junior College in his home town influenced his personality in two ways. First of all, the richer students "snubbed" him, and he resented this bitterly. It also made him very eager to "show them." It him an individual very determined to become wealthy and well-mannered. The other influence was due to his immediate associates who were rather "wild" college boys.

Upon "Uncle Bill's" advice, when finishing Junior College, he decided to go to a University up "North" which had a good Business School. Thus he went to the University of Chicago.

His two years in Chicago impressed him with the fact that in certain ways his education has been sadly neglected. This may account for the fact that he wishes to become better enlightened upon intellectual subjects which he formerly was unable to do. Also Chicago was new and different, and he wanted to learn all about things by the method he knows best: experience.

Thus we bring X's life up to date, and conclude this personality study.

Interview I

Characters: A.M.--An elderly lady who teaches mathematics in one of the Chicago High Schools. She is unmarried. She lives in Hyde Park and is a strict churchgoer. She is of fourth generation Scotch descent and is in moderate financial circumstances. Her contacts with the Negro are that of teacher to pupil and those impersonal contacts made while riding to and from work through the Negro area.

Myself: The interviewer, addressed as Richard by A.M.

Setting: The interview took place in her room in a hotel following dinner. I had previously told her I would like to have her opinions concerning Negroes to supplement work I was doing at the University. She agreed to this.

Myself: Do you have any Negroes in your classes?

A.M. A few, but not very many. You realize, of course, that most of them are not very smart and cannot do work in math.

Myself: What do you think about mixed classes?

A.M.: I approve of them since I am a public servant.
(A brief pause here, then continuing) I am really two persons, one a public servant and the other a person. As a public servant I am always fair and am all for them getting as much education as possible. But, if I had any children I don't think I would like sending them to a school with mixed classes. Though in my teaching I am sure I have always given them just consideration.

Myself: Any particular reason why your own children shouldn't go to school with them?

A.M.: At Tilden we do have some trouble, that is, social trouble. Many times I am sure the White boys pick on them and cause the fights. Often times some of the boys get pretty badly hurt. (then smilingly added) A lot of the Negroes carry knives.

Myself: Would you approve of them living around here?

A.M.: No.

Myself: Why?

A.M.: I wouldn't care to mix socially with them. I am supposed to be a good Christian and I am, everything being equal. In that case it wouldn't be the thing to do.

Myself: Any other reason?

A.M.: No, some Negroes are very nice.

Myself: Have you noticed any distinctive qualities?

A.M.: Not anything that would set them apart. But, Richard, I teach mostly, and when you do this you get their limitations. I tell you this though, I have noticed this in my thirty years of riding the street car. Formerly when I'd go in the morning there was an awful smell which was their own. Now that doesn't exist. That's gone. What's more, a larger majority of colored people read than 25 years ago. You see them with newspapers and magazines on the car. Also, they are better dressed. It would see they are advancing.

(The interview ended, as she looked at her watch and turned on the radio so as not to miss a certain news commentator.)

Interview II

Characters: J.E.--A graduate student in the Business school. He is working his way through school by selling shoes. Originally he came from a Texas family of not too good financial standing.

His contacts with Negroes are made up of those about he has had in the South, those he had while working in the shoe store (located on State Street) and those with Negro students at the University.

Myself--The Interviewer.

Setting: I had dropped in to see him on returning from the Library in the evening. Knowing that he has many contacts with Negroes in his business, I told him that in one of my classes we were studying the Negro and would he mind if I used him as a "guinea pig" and asked him a few questions. He said "OK", and thus the interview began.

Myself: What do you think about the Negroes, J.E.?

J.E.: They're OK, they don't bother me particularly. I don't go out of my way to mix with them.

Myself: Why?

J.E.: (Smiling and obviously trying to "rib", said) I suppose I have what you anthropologists call an inbred dislike for them.

Myself: Well, what do you think about their position?

J.E.: It's not so hot, but I suppose when they get intellectual equality maybe they'll get economic equality.

Myself: Will there be equality?

J.E.: Sure, why not. People talk about establishing separate systems, that's a lot of - - - -. You know damn well we can't and they won't. Take how they move around in the city, or better yet, take the D'Elysee.

Myself: What about down South?

J.E.: Yeah, I'll admit that up here they're on a higher plane. (I frowned here.) I mean they're more advanced intellectually, but the niggers down South are just getting started. It's a question of economic status mostly.

Myself: Could you compare the two groups?

J.E.: Let's see if I can make a generalization. (He took out his pipe, lit it and for a moment stared at the corner of the room as if in deep thought.) I should say Northern niggers if you knew them well might be better due to intellectual superiority, but if you were to know them casually Southern niggers would be better due to their humbleness. (He stopped for a moment and borrowed a match and then continued.) Up here there are really two kinds. The one like the fellows at school and bur-heads on the street car. The ones who come in the store, they're even lower than the ones in the South. They dress slop-hazardly, smell, have a cocky attitude, do most any-

thing to show they are as good as you or even better. In other words, they don't know their place. Those are the ones I call bur-heads." (Here he paused.) Generally though they've got a lot of restrictions, economic factors, large families, restricted Negro districts in a city, where low income and rents cause them to gang together. Things like these cause all sorts of developments, but they're no worse than the Mockies or Italians.

Their past standards have always been low, always been illiterate, incapable of getting jobs to get a good standard of living. A regular tradition has grown up that he is to hold the lowest job. His ability is not recognized. You never find a nigger bookkeeper in a White office or a Negro clerk. Get what I'm driving at? It's grown out of tradition, to begin with. Even when the Northerners freed the slaves they gave them the lowest jobs. All they ever did for them is free them. (He stopped for a moment and knocked the ashes out of his pipe, and started again.)

Another problem is the flow of Southern niggers into Northern cities with philosophies that some income is better than none. They never go back and, worse, they keep lowering the standard of living by wage cutting.

You know, they've made quite a jump from canni-

bals to now in 200 years. You got to expect some repercussions with as great a change as that.

Myself: What's your attitude about them?

J.E.: Let's see, if I were running true to Southern form, I'd say a nigger's a nigger and should be put back in his place. I've conditioned myself otherwise. I don't consider them equals, but I don't go out of my way to show them I'm better.

To get back to the intellectual question. They're like the poor White trash except for color.

I think one of the reasons that they are hated so much in the South is because of politics. After the Civil War the nigger was able to get in power and made trouble for the White, feeling increased, and so forth. This would only be a slight reason. The main difference is due to intelligence and Southern tinge. Their tendency to cling together is unimportant, they're not half as bad as the Jews.

I guess that is about all I can say.

Interview III

Characters: Nick--A man about fifty, a first generation Greek. He is a waiter in a tavern on the outskirts of the Negro area. At one time he lived at a club within the Negro area. He has no education and his earnings are small.

Myself: The interviewer, addressed as Scotty in the interview.

Setting: In a bar room in the early evening. The place empty except for Nick and myself. I'm drinking a glass of beer while Nick is drying some glasses behind the bar. We had been talking about how cities change, etc. The interview began in his mentioning that when he first worked here there weren't any Negroes in this region.

Myself: What do you think about them living around here?

Nick: Scotty, it doesn't make any difference, you can't do nothing about it.

Myself: What do you think of them?

Nick: You know how they are, lazy and not much good, rotten like an apple.

(Unconsciously I glanced toward the other room to see if the Negro piano player, Dave, had arrived.) Oh, of course, some of them are ambitious like Dave. But most of them don't want to get anywhere. No, us Greek boys were always trying to get ahead. (Here he digressed and explained how the Greeks generally make good, etc.) (I put a stop to this by ordering another beer and asking another question.)

Myself: Aren't most Negroes good musicians?

Nick: Now, we had a lot of them before Dave. We used to get a bunch every other week. They weren't like Dave; you couldn't keep them in line. Always yelling about how much work they had to do. Sure we had dancers, piano-player and even had a band. All

of them colored, but no good.

Sure, one of the bands even had a girl who was light-colored who sang. She sure could wiggle. Lots of the white boys who came in used to take her out. (Here he poked me in the ribs and winked and then went out to serve some customers who just came in. On returning he sat on the stool beside me and in a very confidential manner continued.)

When I first came to Chicago there was a nice Greek neighborhood down near 35th Street. We had our own church and we had our fraternity down there. You know the club Pete and Sam and George all belong to. It was a nice place. I lived down there. Then the colored came. They broke things and stole. They were dirty and lazy. They let the neighborhood down. We couldn't stand it down there. Now if they had been ambitious and kept things up like we did it would have been OK, but (a customer entered the bar room so the interview ended).

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